

The White Poles and Wrangel
April – November 1920



“... Раз дело дошло до войны, все интересы страны и ее внутренняя жизнь должны быть подчинены войне.”

“... Before the matter of the war is finished, all interests of the country and internal considerations must be subordinated to the war.”

Map 9

The White Poles and Wrangel // April – November 1920

Colored Lithographic print, 64 x 101 cm. Compilers: A. N. de-Lazari and N. N. Lesevitskii

Artist: A. A. Baranov

Historical Background

As the title of the map indicates, the Soviets maintained that the Poles and the counterrevolutionary White forces operated as allies. Though possessing more or less the same goal, that of defeating the Bolsheviks, the two sides pursued different agendas, as well as withheld military and political assistance from each other, thus foregoing mutual victory.

The most salient features of the map are the application of the colors red and white, as well as the use of photomontage. Red and white, in their variations of density, shading, and force, give the illusion of having been applied in broad brushstrokes of watercolor. Russia is engulfed by an imaginary fireball, which originates near the attack of the Red Army on White positions in the Kuban, and spreads across the nation. The incorporation of photographic cut-outs also gives the illusion that the map is a construction of multi-media. The photographic images depict major protagonists of the period: Bolsheviks and their enemies.

The chief antagonist to Bolshevik aims was Marshal Jozef Piłsudski, Poland's Head-of-State, who is pictured on the Polish flag. **Figure 21** Suspecting a Soviet attack on Poland, Piłsudski launched a preemptive strike into Ukraine on April 25, 1920, taking Kiev from the Bolsheviks within two weeks. Two long-standing considerations drove his decision. First and foremost, no true state of Poland had existed from 1795 to 1918, or the year of the third and final partition until Poland regained its independence at the end of the war. And second, as a consequence of the first issue, no legitimate frontier had separated the Russian-Polish borderlands for 123 years. Piłsudski was compelled to regain the Polish frontier territory lost to the partitions, and wished to secure them by a Polish-dominated federation of states, which included Lithuania, Belarus, and an independent though truncated Ukraine. The coveted territory also included thousands of Jewish villages, known as *shtetls* within a region that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea up to a depth of about 300 miles.



Piłsudski possessed a confederate in his plan to recover the borderlands. He had given asylum to the Ukrainian nationalist warlord-politician, Symon Petliura, who was driven from Kiev by the Red Army and desperately wished to recapture his country. For Piłsudski, Ukraine was a tantalizing prize; its grain, coal, and industry would drive a Polish economic revival as part of the intended borderland federation; and once again Poland would re-govern the vast lands once ruled by their powerful *szlachta*, or landed gentry.

Around the time of his invasion of Ukraine, Piłsudski signed a political agreement recognizing the Directory, headed by Semyon Petliura, as the legitimate authority of an independent Ukraine, in exchange for the return of eastern Galicia to Poland. Later conventions provided for combined military operations and the eventual withdrawal of Polish troops. Though operating at cross purposes, they were united in their goal of driving the Russians from Kiev, with their mutual obstacle being the Red Army.

Pretending to entertain generous terms from the Soviets for settling the frontier dispute, Piłsudski gathered an army of roughly 300,000 soldiers along the eastern front and struck the Ukrainian capital in late April with around 50,000 troops. His success was shortlived, as the invasion incited feelings of patriotism among Russian communists, liberals, conservatives, and ex-tsarist officers, who were willing to unite behind the Bolsheviks to drive their enemy from lands considered traditionally Russian. In early June Semyon Budennyi's Red cavalry penetrated the Polish lines and drove the Poles from Kiev.

Lenin, rejecting a mid-July offer from the British to negotiate a provisional settlement and establish a frontier east of the Bug River, opted to continue the Red Army's advance, likely in fear of what he presumed to be an

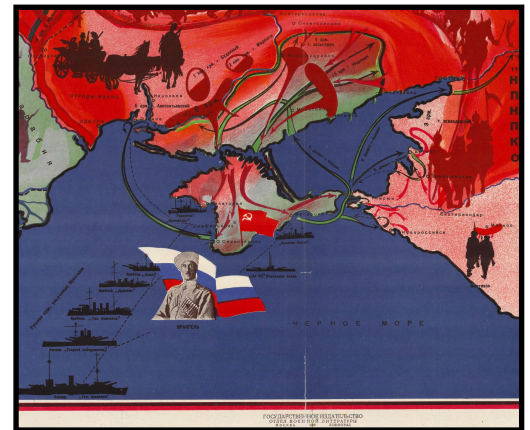
inevitable attack by the Entente. Commander-in-Chief Sergei Kamenev and his staff divided the Red Army along two major fronts that corresponded with axes of direct attack above and below the forested swampland known as the Pripet Marshes. The offensive is illustrated by red silhouetted cavalry; Polish defenders are depicted in green. **Figure 22**



The Red Army made spectacular success along the northern axis, as illustrated by the concentration of red spearheads heading towards Warsaw and beyond, as well as the onrushing figures of the Gaia D. Gai's Third Cavalry Corps. In doing so, however, it vastly overextended its main line. Taking advantage of intercepted Soviet communications, as well as inferior Red Army strategy, Piłsudski's striking forces on August 15-17 cut through the gap between Red Army forces, which were attempting to outflank Warsaw's defenses from the northwest. The Poles completely cut the Russians off from their base, in the process destroying one army, pursuing two others into retreat, and mauling two more, as illustrated by eastward pointing green arrows. Piłsudski and his forces turned the tide of war in the famous battle that became known as "Miracle of the Vistula," which is celebrated annually in Poland.

Ultimately, Soviet political and military miscalculations, Bolshevik hubris, a patriotic Polish army, and the willingness of the Polish high command to stage a daring counterattack combined to give the Poles their first victory as a republic and Lenin and the Soviets their first international military defeat.

While at war with Poland, the Soviets were doubly occupied with eliminating the last White resurgence in the south. In April 1920 Baron Petr N. Wrangel, pictured on the Russian tri-color flag, gathered the survivors of Denikin's Armed Forces of South Russia in the Crimea in a last-ditch effort to combat the Red Army. **Figure 23** Taking advantage of Red military actions in Poland, Wrangel invaded the Tauride and the Kuban, initially with some success, but his forces were too weak to sustain any momentum. Faced with a superior Red Army, his remaining troops retreated at first to the Perekop Isthmus, but were driven back into the Crimea and ultimately out to sea in November 1920 by Red Army units directed by Frunze and Stalin. Although Wrangel had enjoyed the advantage of the Soviet-Polish war, he was never able to draw full cooperation with the Poles, who possessed different goals. He nevertheless may have contributed to a Polish victory by tying up Soviet forces in the south. With him feasible counterrevolutionary opposition to communist rule in Russia more or less ceased to exist.



Other Sectors

The northwest sector of the map is devoted to the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20. In the upper left-hand corner is British Prime Minister David Lloyd George who rests above the white flag with a red cross and the Union Jack in the canton. Normally the standard of the British Royal Marines, it may represent in this case the main instrument of British global imperialism.

In spite of Lenin's ideological position, Lloyd George's ruling Labor Party expressed an interest in restoring Anglo-Soviet trade relations and considered the possibility of recognizing the Soviet government. On July 11 British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, offered to mediate the dispute and establish a frontier that stood about fifty miles east of the Bug River (the line then reoccupied by the Red Army), pending Russian guarantees of respect for ethnic Polish territories. Lenin, despite British threats to support Polish independence with arms and an embargo, rejected Curzon's offer of mediation and ordered the invasion of Poland on July 17.

To the left of the legend, and situated over Moscow, is a red star, in addition to a large furling red flag with the Cyrillic letters in yellow РСФСР (RSFSR), signifying the seat of government the Russia Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. Below that is a photomontage image of “S. S. Kamenev, Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army” and “P. P. Lebedev, Chief of Field Staff.” Following a shakeup in the upper command system in early July 1919, Generals Kamenev and Lebedev were named to their respective positions. Two of the thousands of former tsarist officers who joined the Bolshevik cause, they planned the major campaigns that invaded Poland and destroyed Wrangel.

Below the dual image is a furling red flag with the title Southwestern Front planted over Orël. It signifies front headquarters, commanded by Egorov and Stalin, whose images are seen just to the left.

In the center of the map, planted over Kharkov, is a furling red flag with the title Southern Front. To the right is a photomontage image of three men studying a map. The figures are identified as the following: “S. M. Budennyi Commander First Red Cavalry Army,” “M. V. Frunze Commander of the Southern Front,” and “K. E. Voroshilov Member of Revolutionary Military Council, First Cavalry Army.” The Southern Front, headquartered at Kharkov, was commanded by activist-officer Mikhail Frunze, whom Kamenev tapped to drive the final offensive of the war. To ensure Red success, Kamenev withdrew Budennyi’s cavalry from western Ukraine and directed it to assist the Red Army in the assault on Crimea. Voroshilov served as political commissar of the First Cavalry Army, which had mutinied and engaged in pogroms in western Ukraine in September 1920. In that capacity, he was responsible for improving its morale and political education.

Quotation by Lenin in Southeastern Corner

“... мы только что покончили с врангелем, но войска врангеля существуют где-то. Поэтому кто забудет о предстоящей нам опасности, которая не прекратится, пока существует мировой империализм,- кто забудет об этом, тот забудет о нашей трудовой республике.”

“... We recently put an end to Wrangel, but Wrangel’s supporters are somewhere. But he who forgets the dangers that await us, which will not cease, as long as there is world imperialism,- he who forgets that, forgets about our working republic. “

Translation of Text

ВОЙНА С ПОЛЯКАМИ	
БЕЛОРУССКИЙ ТЕАТР	
КРАСНЫЕ	БЕЛЫЕ
Перед Березинским сражением (к первой половине мая) 15 и 16 Красные армии 66000 бойцов.	1 и 4 польск. армии 65500 бойцов.
Перед войсками Вислу (к 4 июля) 4, 15, 3, 16 Красные армии и Мозырская группа 91463 бойцов.	1 и 4 польск. армии 72600 бойцов.
Перед контр-наступлением Пилсудского (к 15 августа) 4, 15, 3, 16 Красные армии и Мозырская группа 52767 бойцов.	5, 1, 2, 3, и 4 польские армии 107000 бойцов.
УКРАИНСКИЙ ТЕАТР	
Перед наступлением полков на Украину (во второй половине апреля) 12 и 14 Красные армии 12044 бойца.	Польская группа 3, 2 и 6 польские армии 55700 бойцов.
Перед контр-наступлением на Украину (к первым числам июня) 12, 14, и 1 кон. Красные армии 38810 бойцов.	3, 2 и 6 польск. арм. 57000 бойцов.
Перед контр-наступлением Пилсудского (к 15 августа) 12, 14 и 1 кон. Красн. арм. 35000 бойцов.	Польск. силы в Галиции 34500 бойцов.
ВОЙНА С ВРАНГЕЛЕМ	
КРАСНЫЕ	БЕЛЫЕ
Перед наступлением Врангеля (к 9 июня) 13 Красн. армия 12765 бойцов.	Армия Врангеля 22000 бойцов.
Перед решительным наступлением (к середине октября) 4, 6, 13, 1 кон. и 2 кон. Красные армии 143200 бойцов.	Армия Врангеля 37270 бойцов.
Перед атакой Перикопского пере- шейка (к 8 ноября) 4, 6, 13, 1 кон. и 2 кон. Красные армии 133501 боец.	Армия Врангеля 19610 бойцов.

War with Poland

Belorussian Theater

RED

Before the battle of the Berezina
(by the first half of May) 15 and 16
Red armies 66,000 soldiers

Before arriving at the Vistula (4 July)
4, 15, 3, 16, the Red armies and
Mozyr group of 91,463 soldiers

Before Piłsudski's counterattack
(by 15 August) 4, 15, 3, 16
Red armies and Mozyr
group 52,767 soldiers

WHITE

1 and 4 Polish Army 65,500 soldiers

1 and 4 Polish armies 72,600 soldiers

5, 1, 2, 3, and 4 Polish armies
107,000 soldiers

Ukrainian Theater

Before the Polish attack on
Ukraine (by the second half
of April) 12 and 14 Red armies
12,044 soldiers

Before the counterattack in
Ukraine (by the first week of June)
12, 14, and 1 Cavalry Red armies
38,810 soldiers

Before Piłsudski's
counterattack (on 15 August) 12, 14,
and 1 Cavalry Red armies 35,000 soldiers

Polish group 3, 2, and 6 Polish
armies 55,700 soldiers

3, 2, and 6 Polish armies 57,000 soldiers

Polish forces in Galicia
34,500 soldiers

Translation of Text Continued

War with Wrangel

Before Wrangel's attack
(on 6 June) 13 Red Army 12,765
soldiers

Wrangel's Army 22,000 soldiers

Before the decisive offensive
(in mid-October) 4, 6, 13, 1 Cavalry
2 Cavalry armies
143,000 soldiers

Wrangels' Army 37,270 soldiers

Before the attack on the Perekop
Isthmus (on 8 November) 4, 6, 12, 1 Cavalry
and 2 Cavalry Red armies
133,591 soldiers

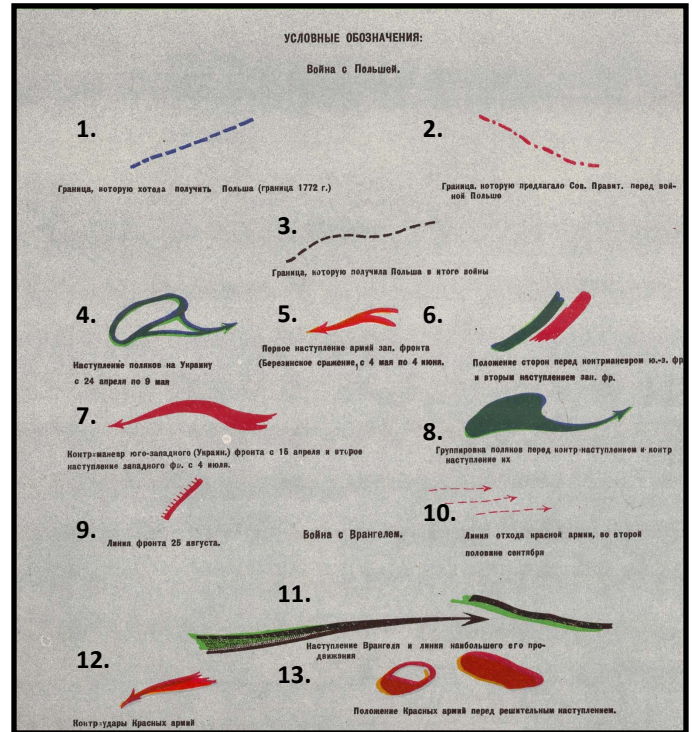
Wrangel's Army 19,610 soldiers

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Conventional Symbols

The War with Poland

1. *The border that Poland wanted to recover (border of 1772).*
2. *The border offered by the Soviet Government before Polish War.*
3. *The border that Poland received as a result of the war*
4. *The Polish assault on the Ukraine from 24 April to 9 May.*
5. *The first attack of the armies on the Western Front (Battle of Berezina, from 4 May to 2 June).*
6. *Position of forces before the counter-maneuver on the Southwestern front and the second attack on the Western front.*
7. *Counter-maneuver on the Southwestern (Ukrainian) front on 15 April and second attack on the Western front on 4 July.*
8. *Grouping of the Poles before the counterattack and during the counterattack.*



The War with Wrangel

9. *Front line on the 25 August.*
10. *Transition of the Red Army line in the second half of September.*
11. *Wrangel's offensive and his line of furthest penetration.*
12. *Counterstrike of the Red Army.*
13. *Position of the Red Army before the decisive offensive.*